



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
Great Government Through the General Management System – Quality, Timeliness, Value
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

CLASS SPECIFICATION

CLASSIFIED

MENTAL HEALTH AIDE

Class No. 004839

■ CLASSIFICATION PURPOSE

Under general supervision, to assist clinical staff in caring for patients who are assigned to the San Diego Psychiatric Hospital; and to perform related work as required.

■ DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

This class is distinguished by its responsibility to perform routine, non-technical, para-professional work in caring for patients who are chronically or acutely mentally ill. Incumbents are assigned to the psychiatric units of the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital.

■ FUNCTIONS

The examples of functions listed in the class specification are representative but not necessarily exhaustive or descriptive of any one position in the class. Management is not precluded from assigning other related functions not listed herein if such duties are a logical assignment for the position.

Essential Functions:

1. Observes and monitors the behavior and whereabouts of patients in order to maintain their safety.
2. Interacts with and provides directions to patients during instances where patients require assistance with daily living activities or when patients demonstrate high risk behaviors, such as becoming agitated, becoming assaultive, or causing a danger to self or others.
3. Reports patient behavior to clinical staff.
4. Prepares written documentation of patient behaviors and treatments in accordance with hospital policy and procedures; and makes notes in medical records, report sheets, and legals.
5. Assists clinical staff during group activities involving patients.
6. Operates medical vital sign equipment and assists clinical staff in order to assess pain experienced by patients.
7. Attends training sessions and staff meetings as required; participates in debriefings in order to exchange information with clinical staff during shift changes.
8. Transports and accompanies and/or escorts patients to court hearings, appointments, or other facilities as necessary.
9. Uses computers to perform required job functions.
10. Provides responsive, high quality service to County employees, representatives of outside agencies and members of the public by providing accurate, complete and up-to-date information, in a courteous, efficient and timely manner.

■ KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of:

- Basic principles and practices of mental health.
- Basic principles of individual and group behavior as applied to mental health patients.
- Crisis intervention techniques as applied to intervening in difficult situations and potential emergency situations involving mental health patients.
- Policy and operating procedures of the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital.
- Basic methods and techniques of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- County customer service objectives and strategies.

Skills and Abilities to:

- Closely observe and monitor the behavior of psychiatric patients during work, meals, recreation and leisure activities in order to identify significant changes in behavior and to maintain the safety of patients.
- Apply specific methods and techniques to restrain and subdue patients, as learned from professional level training on responding to assaultive behavior.
- Maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and hospital policy and procedures; abide by Patients Rights regulations.
- Understand and follow verbal and written instructions, which may entail emergency situations.
- Communicate effectively verbally in order to give clear and concise directions to patients in a positive and helpful manner and tone of voice.
- Communicate effectively in writing in order to prepare clear and concise entries pertaining to incidents and observations.
- Establish effective working relationships with mental health patients, management, employees, and members of the public representing diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- Treat patients, County employees, representatives of outside agencies and members of the public with courtesy, dignity, and respect.
- Assess the patients' immediate needs and ensure patients' receipt of needed services through personal service or referral.
- Exercise appropriate judgment when answering questions, releasing information, and responding to potential emergency situations; analyze and project consequences of decisions and/or recommendations.
- Effectively and safely operate basic medical equipment, such as thermometers, stethoscopes, and sphygmomanometers, in order to measure temperature, pulse, blood pressure, and respiration of patients.
- Operate computers and office equipment.

■ EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE

Education, training and/or experience that demonstrate possession of the knowledge, skills and abilities listed above. Examples of qualifying education, training and experience are:

- An associate's degree in counseling, psychology, sociology or a closely related behavioral science AND at least six (6) months of full time experience working with persons or patients who are mentally ill, OR
- One (1) year of experience working with persons or patients who are mentally ill.

■ ESSENTIAL PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The physical characteristics described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of the classification. Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable an individual with qualified disabilities to perform the essential functions of a job, on a case-by-case basis.

Frequent: Walking, standing, bending and twisting of waist and neck; repetitive use of hands to operate medical and office equipment; grasping, pushing and pulling carts; use gurneys or wheelchairs to transport patients whose weights may vary from 100 pounds to 350 pounds; lifting and carrying medical charts and boxes of supplies weighing up to 30 pounds; manipulating vital sign medical equipment; opening, closing, locking, and unlocking heavy-duty security and fire doors within the hospital that weigh 30 to 40 pounds; bending of wrists and manipulation of fingers to continuously write notes and make constant entries to reports or records; and climbing stepladders and step stools.

Occasional: Support, hold, and contain patients during episodes involving falls or risk of falls, seizure disorders, or aggressive behaviors (with or without staff support or assistance); and apply restraints which requires bending, dexterity, and fastening straps.

Intermittent: Physically contain violent or self-injurious patients; and lift and carry patients on to gurneys, wheelchairs, or beds.

Rare: Carry oxygen tanks and fire extinguishers weighing up to 25 pounds; grasp and squeeze ambu bags; and perform chest compressions when administering cardio compressions during CPR procedures.

■ SPECIAL NOTES, LICENSES, OR REQUIREMENTS

License

A valid California class C driver's license, which must be maintained throughout employment in this class, is required at time of appointment, or the ability to arrange necessary and timely transportation for field travel. Employees in this class may be required to use their own vehicle.

Certification/Registration

A Valid CPR Card is required within the first six months of employment and must be maintained throughout employment.

Valid PRO-ACT (Professional Assault Crisis and Restraint Certification Training) Certification is highly desirable. New incumbents must complete this training during orientation and prior to working with patients.

Training Requirements

- Incumbents must successfully complete a professional training program on assaultive response techniques within the first six months (6) months of employment.
- Incumbents must successfully complete training course(s) on the methods and techniques of cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) within the first six months (6) months of employment.
- Incumbents must successfully complete competency training courses and other Agency-mandated facility-specific training on a continual or as-needed basis.

Working Conditions

The primary work environment is an in-patient psychiatric hospital or care facility. Work involves exposure to blood pathogens, human waste, cleaning agents, medicine, medical equipment with sharp objects, loud noises caused by shouting and yelling by patients. Work may involve exposure to patients with lice or contagious diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) or AIDS. Work involves constantly interact with mental health patients who may be severely disturbed and potentially violent and/or patients who have histories of chronic mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse or dependence. Work situations may be unstable and unpredictable on an occasional basis and may involve responding to medical emergency situations. Work may occasionally involve using stepladders or step stools to obtain or store items. Work may involve rotating shifts and working irregular hours such as evenings, weekends, and holidays.

NOTE: Incumbents may be required to wear personal protective equipment when necessary.

Background Investigation

Must have a reputation for honesty and trustworthiness. Misdemeanor and/or felony convictions may be disqualifying depending on type, number, severity, and recency. Prior to appointment, candidates will be subject to a background investigation.

Probationary Period

Incumbents appointed to permanent positions in this class shall serve a probationary period of six months (Civil Service Rule 4.2.5).

New: December 2, 1981
Reviewed: Spring 2003
Revised: April 15, 2004
Revised: August 5, 2005
Revised: March 31, 2006
Revised: July 19, 2006